The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Behavior in the Sri Lankan Clothing Industry

Article · December 2024

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THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN THE SRI LANKAN CLOTHING INDUSTRY

S.J. Francis., F.N.M. Mikda and M. Ganeshamoorthy

Abstract

Social media plays a crucial role in shaping consumer behaviour in the market. This research intends to examine how social media marketing affects clothing related consumer behaviour in Sri Lanka. By focusing on the question as to how social media marketing affects consumers' decision-making process generally in relation to clothing companies, the study examines the historical development of Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube, assess the influence of social media on customer behaviour, and provide guidance to clothing firms on enhancing their social media marketing tactics. The study specifically targeted active social media users in Sri Lanka, with a focus on 100 consumers as samples from the clothing industry who utilize social media. The data collected underwent reliability analysis to assess its dependability, while additional statistical techniques such as Pearson correlation, multiple linear regression, simple linear regression, and descriptive statistics were employed to examine the proposed hypotheses. The results of this study showed that customer purchasing behaviour towards the clothing industry is positively impacted by social media marketing. The empirical evidence gathered from this study unequivocally supports the notion that social media marketing plays a significant role in shaping consumer behaviours. It is worth noting that the impact of social media marketing varies from country to country. In Bangladesh, it has a direct impact on consumption habits. Purchase intentions also serve as an effective tool to acquire new customers in India. Furthermore, in Sri Lanka, social media marketing has a positive potential to increase purchase intentions. Sri Lanka's cultural landscape provides a unique context for the study of consumer behaviour, which can be very different from other parts of the world..

keywords: social media, clothing industry, marketing, consumer behaviour

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Social media and digital marketing have significantly influenced customer behaviour and thinking in the modern world. According to Zyman (1999), "Traditional marketing is not dying – it's dead!" Utilising the internet and digital media the marketing has become more essential to corporate strategy in the modern world than the traditional marketing. The internet revolution has profoundly influenced customers. The consumer decision-making process model incorporates social media and platforms at each stage, increasing awareness among fashion conscious consumers. These days almost everyone has access to the internet and keeps up with all social media sites via smartphones (Kemp, 2017).

Figure 01: Transformation of Marketing Process

Source: Developed by author

In the UK, 51% of businesses utilize social media marketing with brands like Pretty Little Thing and Shein frequently promote their products on platforms such as TikTok. A UK Statista survey reveals that 25.6% of professionals consider social media to be the most effective digital marketing channel (Shepherd, 2024). A solid social media strategy can help businesses attract cost-effective visitors and boost traffic through various channels. In the Sri Lankan clothing industry, brands such as Victoria's Secret, Liz Claiborne, Jones New York, Nike, Tommy Hilfiger, Triumph, Marks & Spencer, Boss, and others have established a strong international reputation for ethically producing high-quality clothing (EDB, 2019). Local fashion chains such as Nolimit and Odel have also launched their brands, while labels such as Carnage, F.O.A, Pepper Street, Cool Planet, and Jezza have captured local markets by adopting unconventional approaches.

Social media marketing has become crucial in the local context of Sri Lanka, especially in Sri Lanka. As the number of people using the internet increases, social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become increasingly important for connecting local consumers with clothing manufacturers. Influencers play a crucial role in determining consumer choices and fashion trends, and social media enables real-time communication between consumers and brands, promoting a sense of community (Daily News, 2024). A new dimension of the social media network has emerged for social media marketing. Due to its ease of use, efficiency and accessibility for clients, the social media has now become an essential part of the business operations. In the highly competitive clothing industry, the clothing businesses must strive to maintain their market share. While brands employ almost the same marketing tactics and distribution channels, communication is a

crucial component of brand strategy and can significantly influence a brand's success. Businesses are evidently utilising social media to its fullest for marketing purposes, which can create several opportunities for success.

Given the state of the Sri Lankan clothing industry, brands like Victoria's Secret, Liz Claiborne, Jones New York, Nike, Tommy Hilfiger, Triumph, Marks & Spencer, Boss, and others have established a solid international reputation for ethically producing high-quality clothing (EDB, 2019). A few local fashion chains, such as Nolimit and Odel, have also introduced their brands. In addition to other fashion labels like Carnage, F.O.A, Pepper Street, Cool Planet and Jezza have also captured locally and by being competitive in the market. By adopting an unconventional approach to business, they are aggressively pushing their items into the upscale market. Furthermore, given the current state of the clothing industry, where nearly all clothing chains are doing everything in their power to seize competitors' markets, these businesses are more concerned with giving Sri Lankans clothes that fit their local climate (Francis, 2024). As a result, they are utilising social media platforms for their advertising campaigns. With such power, Sri Lankan clothing merchants are engaged in a quiet competition to draw customers to their establishment (Lak, 2023).

Consumer behaviour in the clothing industry has been significantly influenced by social media marketing in the local context of Sri Lanka, especially in Sri Lanka. As the number of people using the internet increases, social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube have grown in importance as means of connecting local consumers with clothing manufacturers. These platforms' emphasis on visuals fits in nicely with Colombo's colourful and varied fashion tastes (Pulse.lk , 2023).

Local clothing businesses such as Carnage, F.O.A, Pepper Street, Jezza, Nolimit, and Odel take use of Sri Lanka's vast cultural diversity by showcasing their newest designs on social media. Influencers—both domestic and international—are essential in determining consumer choices and fashion trends. Social media's ability to provide direct contact makes it possible for Colombo consumers to communicate with brands in real-time, which promotes a feeling of community (Daily News, 2024).

Problem Statement

Small and medium-sized clothing entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka are redefining traditional fashion by embracing fast fashion trends in response to the digitally driven economy. With 14.58 million internet users in January 2023, 66.7 percent of Sri Lankans were using the internet at the beginning of the year. In 2023, age group of 25 to 34 years old had the largest monthly internet user base (ASIA PACIFIC INSTITUTE OF DIGITAL MARKETING (PVT) LTD, 2023). Clothing firms utilize Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube to market their products and engage with their online community. However, the social media platforms available to Sri Lankan retail clothing firms are restricted, and there is a difference in how different age groups use social media for their intended purchases due to concerns of insecurity. Preliminary research conducted on January 2, 2024, revealed that clothing businesses in Sri Lanka face problems from people aged above 50, poor social media content, economic issues, and negative feedback from fake profiles. Understanding how social media

tactics influences consumer behaviour is crucial for organizations to allocate resources effectively and enhance their brand marketing strategies (Team, 2024).

Research Questions

1. How do consumers respond to social media marketing in the clothing industry in Sri Lanka?

2. How do consumers associate with social media marketing in the clothing industry in Sri Lanka?

3. What is the effect of social media marketing on consumer behaviour in the clothing industry in Sri Lanka?

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study are to identify how social media marketing factors has impacted consumer behaviour in the clothing industry in Sri Lanka. The study's other objectives are to 1) identify the nature of responses from consumers of social media marketing and consumer behaviour in the clothing industry in Sri Lanka, 2) examine the relationship between social media marketing and consumer behaviour in the clothing industry in Sri Lanka, 3) analyse the effect of social media marketing on consumer behaviour in the clothing industry in Sri Lanka.

Key Contributions

Through an analysis of social media marketing dynamics, the study seeks to comprehend the socio-cultural, economic, and consumer preferences within the Sri Lanka clothing industry. The focused methodology of the research is essential for customizing marketing strategies to meet the distinct needs and preferences of Sri Lanka shoppers. This approach leads to more effective interventions in the clothing industry within this region, even though geographical limitations may restrict the application of results to different regions or demographics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

The theoretical Review will explain the key concepts of the study. Hence, as the key concepts it was derived consumer behaviour, fashion industry, social media marketing, virtual customer relationship, electronic word of mouth, and trends. Hence, the following explanation will provide definitions and current theoretical knowledge related to selected concepts.

Fashion industry

The fashion industry is a multi-national enterprise that manufactures and sells clothing, encompassing four sections: producers of raw material, producers of fashion items, retail sales, and advertising and promotion. Fashion trends are constantly evolving, with styles from the past decades gaining popularity due to sharing information online and social media. The fashion environment has modernized due to technological changes, leading to new trends. The short product lifecycle of fashion products is becoming shorter due to digital developments. Effective promotional

techniques are crucial to attract, retain, and build customer loyalty. The fashion industry is a global business characterized by a short product life cycle, and technological advancements directly influence fashion industry trends and customer loyalty (Scuotto et al., 2017).

Consumer Behaviour

Consumer behaviour is a widely used concept in social science research, spanning over 50 years (Arndt, 1986). It focuses on how consumers make decisions to fulfil their needs and desires by purchasing products or services in the market (Francis & Salahudeen, 2022). This involves understanding individuals' psychological, physical, and social activities during the purchase, use, and disposal of goods or services (GAJJAR, 2013). Consumer behaviour is crucial in marketing to succeed in the market and focuses on how individuals use their available resources, such as time, effort, and money, to purchase and use products or services to satisfy their needs (Francis et al., 2021). Thus, it is essential to identify consumer behaviour in marketing to succeed in the market.

Virtual Customer Relationship

The rapid advancement of technology has shifted the focus on managing virtual customer relationships through online platforms. These virtual relationships contribute to increased consumer loyalty, brand loyalty, positive e-word of mouth, and long-term customer relationships. Virtual customer management is an efficient and accessible way to assist consumers. Organizations can assess customer needs, gather timely responses, and share information through social media platforms. Strengthening virtual relationships can be achieved through online discussion forums, virtual design toolkits, and customer participation in innovation and value creation (Nambisan & Baron, 2007).

Social Media Advertising

Social media advertising is a popular digital marketing strategy used by businesses to promote their products and reach a large audience. It helps distribute key messages based on demographics, preferences, and behaviours (Afriha & Francis, 2024). The fashion industry often uses social media as a cost-effective and convenient advertising tool (Ahmad, Salman, & Ashiq, 2015). Preparing social media advertisements involves developing quality, and attractive content, focusing on entertainment and familiarity with the target audience. Factors such as social imaging, and advertising spending should be considered when creating advertisements. Overall, social media advertising is a crucial digital marketing strategy for businesses.

Electronic Word of Mouth

Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM) emerged in the 1990s as a digital buzzword, refers to the sharing of information about products or companies via online platforms such as the internet, social media, and mobile communication. This has a direct impact on organizational sales, consumer purchasing decisions, satisfaction, loyalty, and brand relationship creation (Chu, 2021). Virtual communities consider EWOM before making decisions on purchases, and it can have positive or negative

consequences. Social media groups allow users to share opinions, reviews, and suggestions about products or services, comments on advertisements and offer recommendations. EWOM enhances social interaction and strengthens social bonds. Fashion industry consumers use EWOM before making purchase decisions (Sherestha, 2011).

Social Media Trends

Organizations are increasingly utilizing various social media trends in their marketing activities. Short-form videos are increasingly used to clarify product characteristics, tutorials, and reviews. TikTok is emerging as a key platform for connecting with customers and highlighting product manufacturing processes, packaging, and customer reviews. Investment in video production is aimed at enhancing customer base, brand image, and satisfaction. Live streams are becoming popular for sharing public relations and community programs (Luttrell, 2018). Virtual and augmented reality is also becoming popular media trends. As social media functions continue to evolve, organizations can leverage these new trends for their content creation.

Social Media Marketing and Consumer Behaviour

Social media marketing is a successful and low-cost strategy used by organizations to engage with their target audience and promote their products and services. It allows businesses to communicate with existing customers and attract new ones and helps track clients through data analytics (Tuten, 2023). Previous studies have demonstrated that social media marketing can significantly influence consumer behaviour (KAPNIA, 2022), particularly within the fashion industry. Studies have also found that electronic word of mouth, virtual customer relationships, trends, and advertising can enhance purchasing decisions. These studies have also revealed that social media advertising can enhance awareness about products among the virtual community. In the sport apparel sector, studies have found that social media marketing activities can influence consumer behaviour. In India, studies have found that social media advertising directly influences changing consumer purchasing behaviour (Dewia, Herlina, & Boetar, 2022). In Malaysia, studies (Tissera & Mudiyanse, 2022) have found that EWOM and online advertisements positively influence purchase intentions among younger generation. Overall, social media marketing can significantly influence consumer behaviour and satisfaction in the fashion industry.

Empirical Review

Social media marketing and consumer behavior

Social media marketing is the most popular digital marketing strategy. Hence, previous scholars discussed about the relationship between social media marketing with consumer behaviour. Moreover, the previous studies revealed that organization can change the consumer behaviour by using social media marketing strategies. Further, prior studies revealed that virtual customer relationship, social media trends, social media advertising and electronic word of mouth can change the consumer behaviour (KAPNIA, 2022).

Hence, the previous study was conducted as the qualitative study to identify the impact of the social media marketing on the consumer behaviour. Moreover, the study results revealed that electronic word of mouth help to enhance the purchasing decision of the large scale of consumers. Further, it revealed that if electronic word of mouth provides positive reviews, then customer will enhance their purchase intention towards the products. Further, study results highlighted that organization use the social media advertising to increase the awareness about the product among the virtual community. Moreover, it was highlighted that implementing on social media advertising leads to change the consumer behaviour (Unni, 2020).

Further, prior study focused on analysing digital marketing influence on the product purchase decision of the consumers in fashion industry. Moreover, the study employed the qualitative method and inductive research approach to identify this relationship. Further, study data was collected from the five fashion organizations in Bangladesh. According to the study results, electronic word of mouth such as review, and recommendation directly influence on the consumer purchasing decisions in the fashion industry. Moreover, it was revealed that social media advertising and new trends such as face book live shows also enhance the consumer purchase intention of fashion products (Islam, 2021).

Further, the prior study was focused on identify the influence of social media advertising on the consumer behaviour by using 300 social media consumers in western province in Sri Lanka. Moreover, this study was adapted to quantitative research choice and survey research strategy. Further, it was employed entertainment, social imaging, familiarity, and advertising spending as the dimensions of the social media advertising. Hence, study results revealed that Sri Lankan fashion organization can use the social media advertising to enhance the consumer purchasing intention. Furthermore, it highlighted that interesting and exciting content in social media advertisements, familiarity feature and social imaging positively impact on enhance the purchasing behaviour of the consumers (Bandara, 2021).

Moreover, the prior study was focused on the generation Y and social media impact on their purchasing behaviour. Further, study was conducted as the qualitative study and result revealed that social media can change the purchasing behaviour of the consumer sin the fashion industry (Tripathi, 2019). Further, previous study was focused on the sport apparel sector to investigate the impact of the social media marketing on the consumer behaviour. Further, it was focused on social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok application in social media marketing activities. Moreover, study was followed survey research strategy and used questionnaire to collect data from the 74 participants. Hence, study results revealed that social media marketing activities impact on the consumer behaviour in sport apparel industry (KAPNIA, 2022).

Moreover, the prior Sri Lankan study was used face book users who are ages between 18 years and 35 years to determine the impact of the social media marketing on the consumer behaviour. Moreover, study used variables such as electronic word of mouth, sharing, friends like, likes, comment posting, sharing and location-based

checking. Hence, study results revealed that electronic word of mouth can influence the Sri Lankan adult consumers' purchasing behaviour (Bernad and Munasinghe, 2020). Moreover, the prior study was focused on the social media marketing and their influence of changes of purchasing intention of consumers in fashion industry. Moreover, study was conducted as the quantitative study and questionnaires were distributed among the 270 respondents. Further, study data was analysed using the SPSS software and result revealed that social media marketing can enhance the fashion industry consumer's purchase intention (Dewia, Herlina and Boetar, 2022).

Further, it was conducted Indian study to analysis impact on the social media marketing implementation on organization consumer behaviour. Moreover, study sample consisted with hundred and five consumers. Furthermore, study results revealed that social media advertising directly impact on the changing Indian consumer purchasing behaviour and majority of consumer agree that social media marketing help to make their purchasing decisions (Naveena, 2022).

Additionally, a study was carried out in 2013 to examine the influence of social media on consumers' fashion consumption. Additionally, the study used a mixed method approach and gathered quantitative data from 100 social media users. Further, study result revealed that social media marketing activities implementation helps to enhance decision making process of the fashion consumption consumers (McCarthy, 2013). Further, the prior study was conducted as the empirical investigation to identify the impact of the social media influence on the consumer purchasing behaviour in the fashion industry. Moreover, study was employed 130 respondents and results revealed that social media can be employed in fashion industry to enhance the customer satisfaction and attract new customers into organization (Ahmad, Salman and Ashiq, 2015).

Further, the prior study was carried out as the quantitative study by employing 384 respondents in the fashion industry to evaluate relationship between social media marketing and consumer behaviour in Sri Lanka. Hence, study results revealed that social media marketing including social media mix, virtual customer relationship, entertainment and information satisfaction influence on the fashion industry consumer purchasing behaviour (Tissera and Mudiyanse, 2022). Moreover, prior study was employed generation Y Malaysian university consumers as the study sample to derive the relationship between the social media marketing on the purchase intention. Hence, study results revealed that electronic word of mouth, and online advertisements positively impact on the Malaysians university students purchase intention (Balakrishnan, Dahnil and Yi, 2014). Hence, this study was employed electronic word of mouth, virtual customer relationship, social media trends and social media advertising as the independent variables of this study.

Table: 1 Empirical Literature review summary

Article Title	Author	Factors
Does Digital and Social Media Marketing Play a Major Role in Consumer Behaviour?	(Unni, 2020)	Digital culture Online word of

|		mouth Social media advertising
Digital Marketing Influences on Consumer Fashion Product Purchase Decision Through Facebook.	(Islam, 2021)	Electronic Word of mouth Social media advertising social media trend
Impact of Social Media Advertising on Consumer Buying Behaviour: With Special Reference to Fast Fashion Industry	(Bandara, 2021)	Social media advertising
Impact of social media on Generation Y for Buying Fashion Apparel	(Tripathi, 2019)	Social media
The rise of social media marketing and its impact on consumer purchasing behaviour in sports apparel	(KAPNIA, 2022)	Social media marketing [advertising, word of mouth]
The Influence Of Facebook Marketing On Consumer Buying Intention Of Clothing: Evidence From Young Adults	(Bernard *et al.*, 2020)	Likes friends like location-based check in comments posting sharing electronic Word of mouth
The effect of social media marketing on purchase intention in fashion industry	(Dewia, Herlina and Boetar, 2022)	Social media marketing
A Study on Impact of Social Media Marketing In Consumer Behaviour"	(NAVEENA, 2022)	Social media advertising electronic word of mouth online community relationship
The Effects of Social Media On Fashion Consumption	(McCarthy, 2013)	Social media marketing [advertising,]
The Impact of social media on Fashion Industry: Empirical Investigation from Karachiites	(Ahmad, Salman and Ashiq, 2015b)	Social media [social media advertising]
Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Buying Behaviour: A Study Based On Clothing Brands in Sri Lank	(Tissera and Mudiyanse, 2022).	Social media mix information satisfaction Virtual customer relationship Entertainment
The Impact of Social Media Marketing Medium Toward Purchase Intention and Brand Loyalty Among Generation Y	(Balakrishnan, Dahnil and Yi, 2014).	Online advertisement online communities Electronic Word of Mouth

Impact of Social Media Marketing on Purchase behaviour of Youths in Kathmandu.	(Shrestha, 2011)	Facebook marketing electronic Word of mouth organizational factors [brand image, company's profile page, news, notice and declaration] Facebook group Celebrity endorsement product release and reviews

Source: Developed by author

Conceptual Framework

The components found in the literature review served as a guide for the development of the conceptual framework.

Figure 2 - Conceptual model of the study
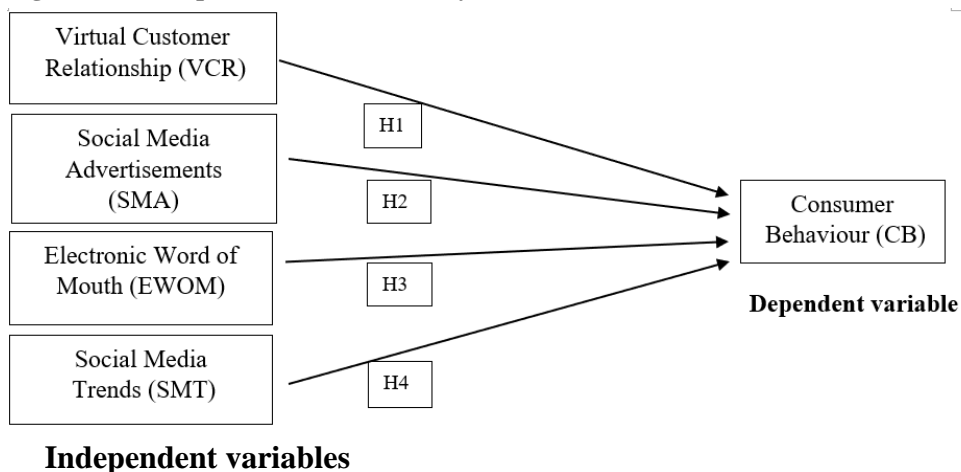
Source: Developed by Authors based on theoretical literature

The main hypotheses are summarized as follows:

H_{1a} -There is a positive linear relationship between virtual customer relationship in social media marketing and consumer behaviour in the clothing industry.

H_{2a} -There is a positive linear relationship between advertisements on social media marketing and consumer behaviour in the clothing industry.

H_{3a} -There is a no positive linear relationship between EWOM in social media marketing and consumer behaviour in the clothing industry.

H_{4a} -There is a positive linear relationship between trends on social media marketing and consumer behaviour in the clothing industry.

In this study, the null hypothesis (Ho) posits that there is no significant relationship between social media marketing and consumer behavior. Conversely, the alternative hypothesis (Ha) suggests that a significant difference does exist.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research philosophy, research methodology, research strategy, time frame, methods, and procedures make up the study design. Additionally, it outlines the general structure of the study process. (Jain, 2022). The research design is questionnaire-based research to test the hypotheses. This research endeavours to comprehend the influence of social media marketing elements on consumer conduct inside the Sri Lanka clothing industry. Quantitative research provides insights by revealing neutrality in the gathered information (Danthanarayana et al., 2024). The personal characteristics of social media marketing that influence consumer behaviour in clothing industry are identified through a descriptive research approach.

The study's target group was defined as consumers who use social media, and this was then sub-divided to include just those who use one of the social media platforms listed in the questionnaire (YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram). Additionally, since the study focussed on consumer behaviour in Sri Lanka, the target group consisted of Sri Lanka residents under the age of 40. The apparel industry was also limited to individuals who made purchases from the retailers listed in the questionnaire (Carnage, F.O.A, Odel, Jezza, Cool planet and Nolimit). The sampling approach employed in this thesis is the probability sampling method. Random samples of Sri Lanka residents were selected, and these individuals were subsequently provided the prerequisite questionnaire. Furthermore, a cluster sample strategy was employed within the wider probability sampling framework for this study due to the limited number of options—specifically, six garment brands and four social media platforms - available among residents of Sri Lanka. Therefore, the sampling technique that the researcher has used in this study is a random cluster sampling technique. Samples were chosen at random, on the specific characteristics required for the study.

The term "survey" refers to a research method that uses questionnaires to collect data. The temporal horizon of the study may be cross-sectional or one-shot, meaning that data were only gathered once. (Lee, 2003). Cluster sampling was employed to gather data from a sample of 100 consumers, all part of the study's target audience - clothing customers and active social media users residing in Sri Lanka. Since most statisticians including James Cridland (2023). Agree that a sample size of at least 100 is necessary to provide any form of meaningful result, the sample size was set accordingly

The questionnaires served as the main source of data for this study. Consequently, the target respondents received them both offline and online with online distribution carried out via WhatsApp. The researcher created a QR code for accessing the questionnaire which was then shared with the six clothing stores listed. The questionnaire consisted of 25 mandatory questions, divided into 8 sub sections. The first two questions in the 1st section served as criteria to ensure that respondents met the target group requirements before proceeding with the rest of the questionnaire.

The first question asked the respondents whether the respondent resides in Sri Lanka and the second asked whether they are an active user of social media. If these two criteria don't meet, then the google form ends and the respondent would submit the form as this is a purposive sampling and in case if it had gone out of the target population by sharing to friends of friends which was to reduce the tendency to collect inaccurate data.

Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) is the analytic programme that was used to analyse the acquired data as the study was more quantitative in nature (Francis and Ganeshamoorthy, 2017). All variables deemed reliable for the purposes of this study when the data were first subjected to a reliability analysis using Cronbach Alpha. Descriptive statistics were also applied to the data to determine the mean value and assess whether the responses supported the hypotheses were agreeable. Multiple regression analysis was utilised to determine the impact of the variables, while Pearson's correlation analysis was employed to assess the relationship between two variables as the researcher has used interval scale for the questionnaire (Francis and Amirthalingam, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

Table 02: Results of Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics						
Measures		**VCR**	**SMA**	**EWOM**	**SMT**	**CB**
N	Valid	100	100	100	100	100
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		4.2725	4.3575	4.4325	4.3567	4.4967
Std. Deviation		.73777	.70465	.53637	.64311	.66582
Skewness		-.995	-1.163	-1.087	-1.462	-1.696
Std. Error of Skewness		.241	.241	.241	.241	.241
Kurtosis		-.164	.279	.889	2.573	2.790
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.478	.478	.478	.478	.478

Source: survey data, 2024

The table above represents the descriptive statistics. In comparison to standard deviation, the researcher analysed the variability in consumer responses. The highest standard deviation is observed in the virtual customer relationship with a value of 0.7377. Therefore, responses to virtual customer relationships show greater variability, compared to the other variables. The lowest standard deviation, which is 0.536, is associated with EWOM. Consequently, responses to EWOM exhibit less variability compared to other items. Social media advertisements, social media trends and consumer behaviour have standard deviations in the range of 0.7 to 0.6, which indicated a moderate level of variability, suggesting that consumer responses to these items are more consistent compared to EWOM.

Reliability Analysis

Table 03 : Results of Reliability Analysis

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of items	Status
Virtual Customer Relationship (VCR)	0.782	4	Good
Social Media Advertisements (SMA)	0.876	4	Good
Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM)	0.785	4	Good
Social Media Trends (SMT)	0.754	3	Good
Consumer Behaviour (CB)	0.828	3	Good
All variables	0.950	18	Excellent

Source: survey data,2024

The researcher conducted a reliability analysis on interval scale items, including virtual customer relationships, social media advertisement, EWOM, social media trends, and consumer behaviour. The results demonstrated high internal consistency among the variables, with Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding 0.7. VCR, the first independent variable, had a reliability of 0.782, while SMA, the second variable, had a reliability of 0.876, and EWOM and SMT, the third and fourth variables, had reliabilities of 0.754, and 0.828 respectively. After addressing the objectives, the researcher operationalized the variables, confirming their high internal consistency and reliability. The Cronbach's Alpha value for all variables is 0.950 which indicates that overall, all the variables have an internal consistency and are reliable.

Homoscedasticity

Figure 3 - Homoscedasticity
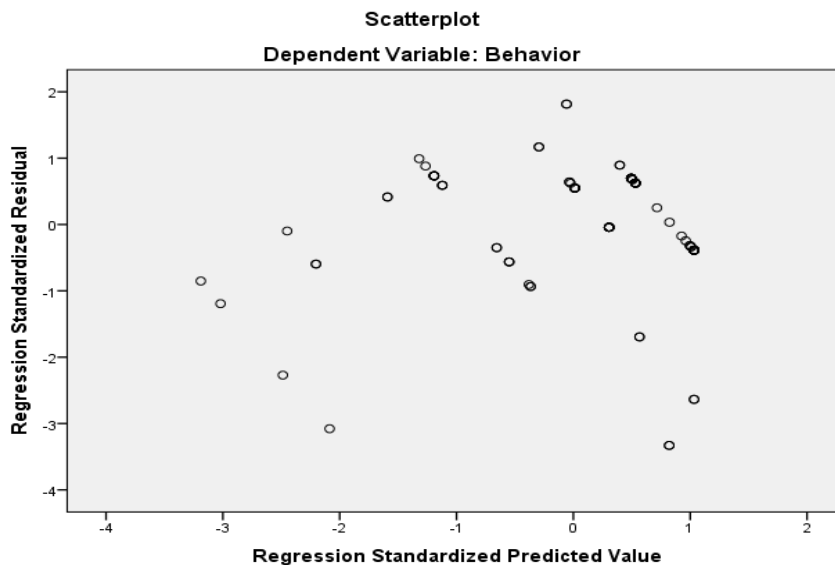
Source: SPSS-26

In the scatter plot, the researcher presented standardized residuals against the standardized predicted values. The scatter plot illustrates the residual behaviour of

consumers. The residuals are randomly distributed with no systematic pattern observed. This means that there is no funnel shape, indicating regression model does not have heteroscedasticity problem. This suggests that the model is effective.

Pearson's Correlation Coefficient Analysis

Table 04 : Results of Pearson's Correlation Coefficient Analysis

Pearson Correlations

		VCR	SMA	EWOM	SMT	CB
VCR	Pearson Correlation	1	.782**	.727**	.655**	.716**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100
SMA	Pearson Correlation	.782**	1	.905**	.786**	.843**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100
EWOM	Pearson Correlation	.727**	.905**	1	.737**	.774**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100
SMT	Pearson Correlation	.655**	.786**	.737**	1	.853**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100
CB	Pearson Correlation	.716**	.843**	.774**	.853**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	100	100	100	100	100

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Compiled by Authors based on survey data, 2024

The correlation analysis reveals a highly significant positive relationship between virtual customer relationships and consumer behaviour. The probability of adding social media content to consumer behaviour is also high, with a coefficient of correlation of 0.843. The probability of EWOM also shows a high positive relationship with consumer behaviour, with a coefficient of correlation of 0.774. The P value of the relationship between trend and consumer behaviour is also high, with a coefficient of correlation of 0.853. Overall, the study indicates a strong positive relationship between social media marketing factors and consumer behaviour.

Multiple Linear Regression Model

Table 05: Model Summary

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.900[a]	.809	.801	.29666	1.598

a. Predictors: (Constant), (VCR), (SMA), (EWOM), (SMT)

b. Dependent Variable: (CA)

Source: Compiled by Authors based on survey data, 2024

The model summary shows a coefficient of determination of 0.809, explaining 80.9% of consumer behaviour, with an adjusted coefficient of determination of 0.801. This indicates that the model is well-fitted and there are no unnecessary independent variables. The multiple correlation of 0.900 indicates a strong correlation between social media marketing factors, including virtual customer relationships, ads, EWOM, and trends. The Durbin-Watsons statistics of 1.598 indicates that the residuals are independent, confirming the model's validity.

Table 06: ANOVA results for the regression model

ANOVAᵃ						
Model		**Sum of Squares**	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
1	Regression	35.527	4	8.882	100.919	.000ᵇ
	Residual	8.361	95	.088		
	Total	43.888	99			
a. Dependent Variable: (CA)						
b. Predictors: (Constant), (VCR), (SMA), (EWOM),(SMT)						

Source: Compiled by Authors based on survey data, 2024

In the regression ANOVA, the probability associated with the F statistics is 0.000. This is highly significant, indicating that the model is jointly significant. Therefore, all the independent factors of social media marketing jointly influence consumer behaviour. This means that virtual customer relationship, ads, EWOM and trends jointly influence on consumer behaviour.

Table 07: Coefficients for the regression model

Coefficientsᵃ								
Model		**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**			**Collinearity Statistics**	
		B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**	**t**	**Sig.**	**Tolerance**	**VIF**
1	(Constant)	.375	.276		1.362	.177		
	VCR	.085	.065	.094	1.298	.197	.382	2.615
	SMA	.380	.117	.402	3.246	.002	.131	7.657
	EWOM	-.024	.131	-.020	-.186	.853	.179	5.582
	SMT	.508	.076	.490	6.706	.000	.375	2.665
a. Dependent Variable: (CA)								

Source: Compiled by Authors based on survey data, 2024

According to the study, the equation can be rewritten as:

$$CA = \beta_0 + \beta_1 VCR + \beta_2 SMA + \beta_3 EWOM + \beta_4 SMT + \varepsilon \qquad \text{.(01)}$$

$$CA = 0.375 + 0.085\,VCR + 0.380\,SMA - 0.024\,EWOM + 0.508\,SMT \qquad \text{(02)}$$

According to the individual coefficients, probability for ads is 0.002 which is highly significant. Individual beta value is 0.380, indicating that ads have a high significant positive effect on consumer behaviour. The P value of trend is also highly significant at 0.000 and the individual beta value is 0.508. This indicates that trend also has a high significant positive effect on consumer behaviour.

The other two factors are individually insignificant with a P value of 0.197 for virtual customer relationship and a P value of 0.853 for EWOM. Therefore, while these two variables do not individually affect the consumer behaviour, they influence jointly on consumer behaviour. According to standardized coefficient of beta, most influencing factor is e trends, with a standardized beta coefficient of 0.490. The second most influential factor is ads with a standardized coefficient of 0.402. According to the collinearity statistics, all the VIF values are less than 10, indicating that the independent variables are not perfectly correlated. This indicates that the beta values accurately represent the corresponding effect of the variables. This means that there is no multicollineraity problem validity of the model.

Table 08: Validity Test

Social media		Standardized Residual
Virtual	Pearson Correlation	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
	N	100
Ad	Pearson Correlation	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
	N	100
EWOM	Pearson Correlation	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
	N	100
Trend	Pearson Correlation	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
	N	100

Source: Compiled by Authors based on survey data, 2024

According to the relationship between social media marketing factors and standardized residuals all the p values are perfectly significant, with a value of 1.00. This means that the independent variables are not correlated with the residuals, indicating that the model is highly valid. This means that all the variables have a positive linear correlation with the dependent variable consumer behaviour. Therefore, all the H_n hypotheses are accepted, and all the H_o hypotheses are rejected, according to the findings. The models are thus considered highly valid.

Hypothesis Summary

The main objective of this study was **"To identify how social media marketing factors has impacted consumer behaviour in the clothing industry in Sri Lanka."**

This objective was dissected into 3 sub objectives and all of which were addressed. This study has therefore addressed all the objectives and research questions using the techniques mentioned above. It has also tested the hypothesis using these techniques to determine if all the alternative hypotheses are accepted and the null hypothesis rejected.

Table 09: Hypothesis summary

Hypothesis	Relationship	Status	Justification
H1	Positive significant	Accepted	R= 0.76
			R square= 0.512
			P- value = 0.000
			Coefficient= 0.484
H2	Positive significant	Accepted	R=0.843
			R square=0.711
			P- value =0.000
			Coefficient=0.597
H3	Positive significant	Accepted	R=0.774
			R square=0.599
			P- value =0.000
			Coefficient=0.720
H4	Positive significant	Accepted	R=0.853
			R square=0.728
			P- value =0.000
			Coefficient=0.883

Source: Compiled by Authors based on survey data, 2024

The results show that each of the four hypotheses has a positive and significant impact on the variables of social media marketing and consumer behaviour. The null hypothesis is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis, which confirms the validity of variables is accepted. All the independent variables have a collective impact on the dependent variable.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To sum up, this study set out to assess the influence of social media advertising on consumer behavior, specifically focusing on the clothing industry. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the gathered data. Consequently, the results of the regression analysis demonstrate that the independent variables have a significant impact on the dependent variable. The study's four hypotheses were all accepted as the variables—VCR, trends, EWOM, and Ads were found to have a substantial positive significant influence on the dependent variable, and consumer behaviour. The study's implications offer apparel retailers and marketers with valuable insights. Similarly, this research serves as a valuable literature source for researchers in the future.

Culture has the potential to influence the fashion business. Accordingly, cross-cultural factors should be a primary focus of future research. This research solely focuses on the general changes in customer behaviour resulting from the social media marketing. Therefore, it is imperative that researchers in the future quantify the influence of every aspect of the behavioural process. Moreover, the study collected data through a survey, which may have limitations such as unclear questions that could lead to decline to answer. In order to better discover underlying emotional factors, it might be wise for future research to alter the questions. From the standpoint of the study, the quantitative component was mostly looked at. To provide far more reliable data, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods should be used. Furthermore, additional research is required to apply the findings to other contexts because the study's measurement of social media marketing's impact on customer behavior is limited to the fashion industry. The study's 100-person sample size may limit the validity of its findings for a broad population, and its geographic focus on Sri Lanka further hinders extrapolation. Further research is therefore required for far more dependable outcomes, and other investigations are required to generalize the findings.

In addition, this study employs a cluster sampling approach, focusing on a specific number of clothing retailers and social media platforms. This approach may introduce biases and does not include the individuals that uses other social media platforms, which could influence their behaviour.

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